

TESTIMONY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

**HEARING ON THE MAYOR'S FISCAL YEAR
2007 BUDGET REQUEST**



**Testimony of Michelle Pourciau
Acting Director
District Department of Transportation**

**Anthony A. Williams
Mayor**

**Committee on Public Works and the Environment
Carol Schwartz, Chairperson**

**Wednesday, March 29, 2006
10:00 a.m.
Council Chambers
Washington, DC**

Good morning, Chairperson Schwartz, Councilmembers and staff. I am Michelle Pourciau, Acting Director of the District of Columbia Department of Transportation (DDOT). I am joined by Pamela Graham, Associate Chief Financial Officer, and we are pleased to be before you today to present testimony in support of the Mayor's Fiscal Year 2007 budget request for DDOT.

I want to briefly review a number of notable events and accomplishments that have occurred since I last appeared before you during the Oversight Hearing.

South Capitol Bridge Designs

Mayor Williams unveiled four possible designs for a new South Capitol Street/Frederick Douglass Bridge over the Anacostia River, a significant milestone for DDOT, the Corridor and the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative. The Mayor pointed out how this distinctive addition to the District's skyline will enhance one of our city's most significant gateways to the heart of downtown and the Nation's democratic institutions. The new bridge will help bring together neighborhoods on both sides of the river.

DDOT is soliciting comment on the four designs, with a community meeting planned for April 13th at 6 pm at Van Ness School, 5th & M Streets, SE.

While the planning proceeds for the new bridge, major work will start this summer to transform the existing South Capitol Street Bridge and corridor to greatly improve the appearance and pedestrian access along South Capitol Street.

Parking

Parking is always a sensitive issue and I want to report on some actions that we think will benefit two areas of the District with special problems. For the '06 baseball season, we recently mailed a letter to every household within the RFK Enhanced Enforcement Zone which outlines special parking restrictions around the stadium, a map highlighting the boundaries of the Zone, a 2006 schedule of events at RFK Stadium and Visitor's Passes.

The question of religion-related parking -- particularly double-parking near places of worship during religious events -- is generating much community comment by all concerned. DDOT has invited public input on proposals to increase parking spaces adjacent to and around religious congregations and to step up enforcement against parking violations.

The goal is an easy-to-understand, enforceable, safe system that allows congregations to park near their places of worship and ensures residents' access to their cars. We will work with all the concerned parties--residents, congregations, DC government agencies--to develop site-specific procedures that work for everybody.

Tree Pruning

Tree trimming by PEPCO to increase reliability and safety, has generated much comment, particularly in Chevy Chase. At several recent meetings, the Urban Forestry Administration and PEPCO described the current procedures that follow national standards and have recently been improved. These recent discussions have shown that UFA needs to enhance its communications activities.

Pedestrian Safety

Safety, particularly pedestrian safety, is a top DDOT priority. The tragic deaths of six pedestrians so far this year are of serious concern to DDOT and our safety partners, the Metropolitan Police Department. Our safety efforts were on display this Monday afternoon at the crosswalks of 14th & Shepherd Streets, NW. Plainclothes officers crossed the street to test whether motorists came to the required stop. 26 citations were issued: 16 for failing to stop for a pedestrian in an unsignalized crosswalk, five for seatbelt violations and four for driver cell phone use.

Context of FY 2007 Budget Request

With the support of Council, and in particular you and your staff, Councilmember Schwartz, DDOT has been able to continue to address transportation issues in a proactive manner. Adam Maeir, in particular, has been instrumental in his participation in the

innovative efforts of the parking meter and bus shelter committees. Additionally, DDOT staff continues to improve in responding to unplanned challenges efficiently and effectively.

The FY 2007 budget supports the key goal shared by the Mayor and this Committee to further stabilize and enhance the quality of the District's public spaces, including its transportation infrastructure, and ensure that there is long-term, adequate funding for this critical task.

New transportation initiatives, such as the Circulator, streetcar designs, and parking proposals have initially been successful and we will now look toward enhancing and expanding these services. We will continue to support the transportation infrastructure which includes more than 200 bridges, 1,100 miles of roads and sidewalks, over 110,000 trees as well as parking meters, signs, signals and streetlights.

The Zogby public opinion poll that DDOT commissioned last year shows that DDOT has come a long way in achieving its goals both on the ground and in the perception of our customers.

While these results were presented at the Oversight hearing last month, I feel they are worth repeating. Respondents are generally happy with the services provided by DDOT and the speed with which they are provided. For example, clearing the snow has gone from a 42% positive rating to a 60% positive rating. Streetlights have gone from 50% to 65% positive. Our overall performance was viewed positively by 38% of respondents in 2004, and has jumped to 58% positive in 2005. General condition of the trees went from 51% positive to 58% positive and the condition of the roads from 16% positive to 27% positive.

Budget Request

The Mayor's FY 2007 budget request will enable DDOT to continue to provide reliable transportation facilities and services while enhancing the quality of life and economic competitiveness of the District. The FY 2007 budget request includes \$42.7 million and 104 FTEs for DDOT. Of this total, \$34.3 million and 100 FTEs are funded from Special

Purpose funds, \$7.5 million and 1 FTE from federal sources, and \$235,000 and 3 FTEs from intra-district funds.

I would now like to update you on the Administrative Support fund, which was established with your support last year, and the Highway Trust Fund.

Administrative Support Fund

Last year, the Mayor proposed the DDOT Administrative Support Fund. This fund was to be supported by public space rental fees (excluding bus shelter advertisements) and parking meter revenues.

In FY06, the fund is expected to collect \$30.4 million in revenue. Our projections for FY 2007 total \$34.3 million including \$18.3 million from public space rental and \$16 million in parking meter revenue. The increase from public space rental revenues can be attributed to an increase in applications for sidewalk cafes and collection enforcement of existing cafes. Additionally, a better system has been established for underground vault billing, which will lead to additional revenue. Finally, underground vault fees are tied to the adjacent building's assessment, the rise in building assessments has led to an increase in these vault fees.

Net parking meter revenue figures for 2005 are \$13,539,818.17. So far this year we are approximately 15% ahead of last year revenue figures collected during the same period. Factors that will increase parking meter revenues are improved parking contract management, programmatic and staffing structure improvements.

As predicted, DDOT's Administrative Support fund has resulted in the stabilization of DDOT's general fund budget. The fund has enabled DDOT to pay for operating costs from this fund, and capital and maintenance costs from the Local Road Maintenance Trust Fund (LRMTF). This action allows us to further refine and protect the uses of the Local Roads Trust Fund – ensuring that it is not used to supplant administrative or non-capital investment activities.

Highway Trust Fund

DDOT has made great progress in spending its Federal Highway funds and in strengthening our relationship with the Federal Highway Administration and relevant congressional committees. So much so that the District received the fourth highest 2005 redistribution among the 50 states as a percent of federal annual funds received. The District also received an unprecedented \$147.5 million in earmarks in the 2005 transportation reauthorization bill, SAFETEA-LU.

At the same time, however, our Highway Trust Fund which provides the required 20 percent match to federal highway funds is on the verge of going broke. Gas tax collections are declining as drivers buy cheaper gas in Maryland and Virginia and the District's gas stations dwindle. DDOT has been relying on an accumulated fund balance for the past several years, but the balance will be spent in its entirety in FY 2006.

Budget Request Details

Now I will discuss the details of DDOT's budget request for FY 2007. The DDOT Performance Based-Budget is made up of four programs, which describe the primary functions of the agency – Infrastructure Development and Maintenance, Transportation Operations, Agency Management, and Agency Financial Operations.

Infrastructure Development and Maintenance

The Infrastructure Development and Maintenance program provides and maintains a high quality transportation infrastructure for residents, businesses, and commuters so that they can travel safely within DC through activities such as preventive and routine roadway maintenance, tree management and snow removal.

The FY 2007 budget request for this DDOT program is \$12,887,928 which is an increase of \$5.8 million from FY 2006. The primary source of this funding change is a \$5.2 million increase in Special Purpose Revenues funds for the reallocation of funding for the Snow Program and a new UFA grant of \$700,000 from the Water and Sewer Authority for environmentally friendly combined sewer system management.

Transportation Operations

The focus of the Transportation Operations program is to ensure and enhance transportation operations, safety, and streetlight services. Our program works to improve traffic flow; provide funding and coordination with WMATA; plan and develop bicycle/pedestrian transportation facilities; and provide educational services to the traveling public. DDOT is requesting \$18,740,950 for FY 2007; a decrease of about \$5.1 million from FY 2006.

The major changes from 2006 are due to a net increase in personnel services costs, increases of \$2,802,405 in streetlight and traffic signal energy costs, and a decrease of \$5,183,716 for the proposed reallocation of the funding for the Snow Program to Infrastructure Development and Maintenance program.

Agency Management

A budget of \$10,249,144 is requested for DDOT's Agency Management program in FY 2007, which is an increase of \$1.6 million from 2006. Changes in the Agency Management program budget include a \$1.6 million increase in Office of Property Management – managed fixed costs, offset by a slight decrease in telephone and occupancy costs. Also there is a requested increase of \$858,742 for personal services to fund a transfer of 12 FTE's from the Transportation Operations program to Agency Management as well as to fund base pay and step increases.

Agency Financial Operations

The Agency Financial Operations program provides comprehensive and efficient financial management services to and on behalf of District agencies. DDOT is requesting \$858,202 for FY 2007, up from \$393,940 in FY 2006. This increase is primarily due to the transfer of FTEs from Transportation Operations and the Department of Public Works as well as base pay and step increases.

School Transit Subsidy Program

I believe that the School Transit Subsidy program is of high interest to the Council since you approve funding to WMATA for subsidized travel for eligible District students to get to school and related activities.

The FY 2007 budget request for the School Transit Subsidy program is \$5,425,000 million in local funds. This represents an increase of 5 percent from FY 2006 to support ridership growth, fare increases and union wage increases.

Conclusion

The Mayor's budget looks to ensure that there is adequate long-term investment in our transportation infrastructure. I look forward to partnering with Council to implement our vision for the District.